

**WASHINGTON STATE
WORKFORCE TRAINING AND EDUCATION COORDINATING BOARD
MEETING NO. 113**

**BUILDING OUR FUTURE CONSTRUCTION WORKFORCE
ONE STUDENT AT A TIME!**

Background:

Increasing the capacity of high schools, community and technical colleges, and apprenticeship programs to provide high-quality workforce education and training was identified as an objective to close the skills gap in *High Skills, High Wages 2004*. One of the strategies to accomplish this objective was to expand preparation programs for apprenticeship in high-demand clusters, including construction. Spokane Public Schools, in collaboration with multiple partners, initiated a successful pre-apprenticeship program in the construction trades. Lisa White, Career and Technical Education Director for the Spokane School District will present this innovative and collaborative initiative. She will be joined by partners from the Community Colleges of Spokane, Area Apprenticeship Coordinators, Department of Labor and Industries and local contractors who support this effort.

The following background information was provided by Ms. Lisa White, Spokane Public Schools:

Spokane Public Schools and the Spokane Skills Center (representing Central Valley, West Valley, East Valley, Mead, Deer Park, Cheney, Freeman, Medical Lake, Nine Mile Falls, Reardan-Edwall, Liberty, Oakesdale, and Rosalia School Districts and home school students) have long-standing, collaborative partnerships with the Spokane Chapter of the Inland Northwest Apprenticeship Coordinators Council. The council represents 17 building trades with 800+ apprentices enrolled in Spokane Community College.

This endeavor has developed articulation agreements for project utilization of apprentices on all new school construction for Spokane Public Schools.

Our collaboration has three main goals:

Goal #1 - *To assist students navigating the pathway to successful entry into postsecondary opportunities such as apprenticeship and community college.*

Goal #2 – *To increase the number of young women and students of color who take career and technical education courses that lead to pre-apprenticeship in high school and at the Spokane Skills Center.*

Goal #3 - *To increase apprenticeship utilization on public school construction as well as other construction projects in Spokane and surrounding counties.*

The Spokane Area Chapter of the Inland Northwest Apprenticeship Coordinators Council, (INACC) is made up of apprenticeship program coordinators and training directors representing 17 construction crafts. Our programs presently train over 800 apprentices in the area and our numbers are growing. Many of our programs have been in place for 60 years or more and thousands of skilled construction workers have passed through our programs. Each program is sponsored and funded by the construction industry and are partnered with Community Colleges

of Spokane for the delivery of the required related classroom/lab instruction that is an integral part of an apprentice's path to journey level status. Each program has required on-the-job work hour requirements that allow for the knowledge transfer from journeyman to apprentice on a one to one mentor/instructor basis. The construction industry has developed this method of training to insure the continued availability of a skilled workforce for the future.

Recruitment of qualified applicants is an ongoing process of each program. Our group participates in many of the career and educational fairs in the area to get information out to the community about the availability of apprenticeships and careers in the construction industry in the Spokane area. In partnership with Spokane Public Schools and the Spokane Skills Center, we developed a pre-apprenticeship program for junior and senior high school students that will provide career exploration of the construction industry and more importantly provide the program graduates an alternative work history, acceptable to employers and apprenticeship programs, bridging the competitive gap with work experienced applicants.

Our efforts also include the recruitment and retention of female and minority apprentices. Our programs have been somewhat successful with minority populations, but the female participation has been low and is now falling even lower. The competition for qualified female applicants in this shrinking workforce is fierce and the perceived image of women in the construction industry is no help. Our group is striving to change the image of the construction industry and show that careers in construction can be obtained by anyone regardless of gender or race.

On June 1, 2006, we held our second annual "Pizza, Pop and Power Tools" career fair for middle school girls. This event, a partnership between Spokane Public Schools, Community Colleges of Spokane, Washington State Construction Skills panel, the Spokane Chapter of INACC, the Spokane Area Workforce Development Council, and the Department of Labor and Industries provides hands-on workshops highlighting construction careers such as carpentry (both commercial and residential), sheet metal, heavy equipment, rigging and electrical. The goal of this event is to inform young women of the many opportunities for females in the industry. Apprentice and journey level women from the trades were mentors/presenters at each workshop to reinforce the message that construction is a viable career path for women and shared their successes and experiences in the trades. We will continue to monitor the course taking patterns of these young women as they move through high school and encourage them to consider employment in the high wage/high skill construction workforce.

Event participation doubled from last year; with over 100 girls from Spokane, Central Valley and West Valley school districts. Over \$6,000 from local businesses, credit unions, Spokane Area WDC, and the apprenticeship unions helped defray the costs of the event.

Board Action Requested: None. For discussion purposes only.